

**To:** Smith - CDPHE, Warren[warren.smith@state.co.us]  
**From:** Faulk, Libby  
**Sent:** Thur 8/6/2015 2:53:16 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Discharge into Las Animas

Hi Warren,

Here is the statement that EPA issued:

### **EPA Statement**

This morning at approximately 10:30 am, an EPA and State Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety team working to investigate and address contamination at the Gold King Mine in San Juan County, Colo. unexpectedly triggered a large release of mine waste water into the upper portions of Cement Creek. Initial estimates are that the release contained approximately 1M gallons of water that was held behind unconsolidated debris near an abandoned mine portal. There were several workers at the site at the time of the breach, all were unharmed.

The primary environmental concern is the pulse of contaminated water containing sediment and metals flowing as an orange-colored discharge downstream through Cement Creek and into the Animas River.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment has notified water users downstream of the release so they can take appropriate steps to turn off intakes until the contaminated water passes. The Town of Silverton does not take water out of the affected portions of Cement Creek. Due to current and longstanding water quality impairment associated with heavy metals there are no fish populations in the Cement Creek watershed and populations in the Animas River have historically been impaired for several miles downstream of Silverton. Over the next several days, EPA teams will be sampling and investigating downstream locations to confirm that the release has passed and poses no additional concerns for aquatic life or water users.

“This unfortunate incident underscores the very reason EPA and the State of Colorado are focused on addressing the environmental risks at abandoned mine sites,” said David Ostrander,

director of EPA's emergency response program in Denver. "We are thankful that the personnel working on this mine cleanup project were unharmed. EPA will be assessing downstream conditions to ensure any impacts and concerns are addressed, as necessary."

I'm waiting for clarification on who all this information as sent to locally. Thanks, Libby

Libby Faulk, Program Manager

Public Affairs and Community Involvement

US EPA, Region 8

1595 Wynkoop Street

Denver, CO 80202

[faulk.libby@epa.gov](mailto:faulk.libby@epa.gov)

303-312-6083

**From:** Smith - CDPHE, Warren [mailto:[warren.smith@state.co.us](mailto:warren.smith@state.co.us)]

**Sent:** Thursday, August 06, 2015 8:44 AM

**To:** Faulk, Libby

**Subject:** Re: Discharge into Las Animas

Thank you, Libby. Cynthia left me a message asking me to get the information to Lee on the Upper Animas team. I'm not sure of Lee's last name, and don't have contact info. Can you help, please?

Thanks.

Warren

On Thu, Aug 6, 2015 at 7:26 AM, Faulk, Libby <[Faulk.Libby@epa.gov](mailto:Faulk.Libby@epa.gov)> wrote:

Hi Warren,

Was out on leave yesterday afternoon but did get the emails from both you and Jeanine. Rich Mylot took the lead. I'll let you know what was done on our part as soon as I catch up this morning.

Thanks! Libby

Libby Faulk, Program Manager

Public Affairs and Community Involvement

US EPA, Region 8

1595 Wynkoop Street

Denver, CO 80202

[faulk.libby@epa.gov](mailto:faulk.libby@epa.gov)

303-312-6083

**From:** Smith - CDPHE, Warren [mailto:[warren.smith@state.co.us](mailto:warren.smith@state.co.us)]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 05, 2015 2:10 PM  
**To:** Peterson, Cynthia; Faulk, Libby  
**Subject:** Fwd: Discharge into Las Animas

Good Afternoon: You likely know more about this than I do, but just in case, see the message string below.

## Warren

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Arck - CDPHE, Freddy** <[freddy.arck@state.co.us](mailto:freddy.arck@state.co.us)>  
Date: Wed, Aug 5, 2015 at 1:57 PM  
Subject: Fwd: Discharge into Las Animas  
To: Warren Smith - CDPHE <[warren.smith@state.co.us](mailto:warren.smith@state.co.us)>

FYI at the moment. I noticed that you were not copied on this. I think Mark Salley thinks you are out of the office.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Salley - CDPHE, Mark** <[mark.salley@state.co.us](mailto:mark.salley@state.co.us)>  
Date: Wed, Aug 5, 2015 at 1:54 PM  
Subject: Re: Discharge into Las Animas  
To: "Hartman - DNR, Todd" <[todd.hartman@state.co.us](mailto:todd.hartman@state.co.us)>, Martha Rudolph - CDPHE <[martha.rudolph@state.co.us](mailto:martha.rudolph@state.co.us)>, David Kurz - CDPHE <[David.Kurz@state.co.us](mailto:David.Kurz@state.co.us)>, Gary Baughman - CDPHE <[gary.baughman@state.co.us](mailto:gary.baughman@state.co.us)>, patrick pfaltzgraff <[patrick.j.pfaltzgraff@state.co.us](mailto:patrick.j.pfaltzgraff@state.co.us)>, Jeannine Natterman - CDPHE <[jeannine.natterman@state.co.us](mailto:jeannine.natterman@state.co.us)>, Freddy Arck - CDPHE <[freddy.arck@state.co.us](mailto:freddy.arck@state.co.us)>

Thanks Todd for the additional update.

I tried to reach Rich Mylott (for those who don't know, the PIO at EPA), left voice mail on his desk and cell phones suggesting that both DNR and CDPHE think EPA is the likely lead on this.

I've had no media calls on this.

Mark

On Wed, Aug 5, 2015 at 1:48 PM, Hartman - DNR, Todd <[todd.hartman@state.co.us](mailto:todd.hartman@state.co.us)> wrote:

additional ...

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Brannon - DNR, Ginny** <[ginny.brannon@state.co.us](mailto:ginny.brannon@state.co.us)>  
Date: Wed, Aug 5, 2015 at 1:38 PM  
Subject: Re: Discharge into Las Animas  
To: Mike King - DNR <[mike.king@state.co.us](mailto:mike.king@state.co.us)>, Robert Randall - DNR <[robert.randall@state.co.us](mailto:robert.randall@state.co.us)>, Todd Hartman - DNR <[todd.hartman@state.co.us](mailto:todd.hartman@state.co.us)>

Some points of clarification after consulting with Tony and, since they were not agreeing on all points, then Tony and Bruce together, including our involvement:

It is not a superfund site, but it is subject to a CERCLA removal action by EPA, so EPA jurisdiction.

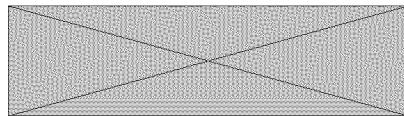
We had it permitted in the 1980's, the permit was later forfeited and the AML program redirected surface flows and closed the portals.

As Bruce mentioned, Alan Sorenson was working as an adviser and technical consultant to EPA, primarily on the Red and Bonita, but also on the Gold King although he was not with the EPA contractors this morning.

Bruce and Tony agree that the pressure would have blown at some point no matter what.

Ginny Brannon

Division Director



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1313 Sherman Street, Room 215, Denver, CO 80203

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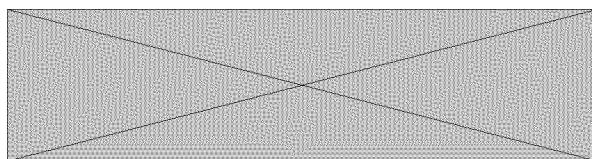
On Wed, Aug 5, 2015 at 12:47 PM, Brannon - DNR, Ginny  
<ginny.brannon@state.co.us> wrote:

EPA's response team was working on rehabilitating a portal at the Gold King Mine near Silverton this morning and a plug blew that discharged hundreds of thousands of gallons water contaminated with heavy metals and debris, the volume of which is approximately 20 to 30 feet deep, into Upper Cement Creek. The heavy metals include iron, zinc and copper. We estimate the water will hit the confluence with Las Animas in the next 10-15 minutes and flow through Silverton.

...

**Mark Salley**

Communications Director

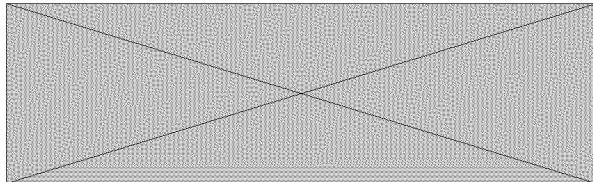


office: 303.692-2013 | cell: 303.921-8594

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**Freddy Arck**

**Public Information Specialist**



P 303.692.3304 | C 303.919.0675

4300 Cherry Creek Drive South

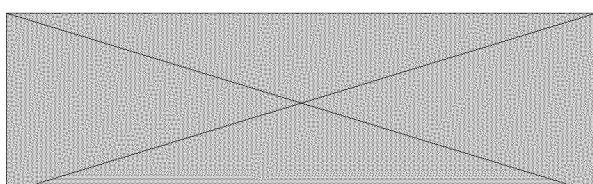
Denver, CO 80246-1530

[www.colorado.gov/cdphe/hm](http://www.colorado.gov/cdphe/hm)

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**Warren Smith, APR**

**Community Involvement Manager**

Community Involvement Unit



P 303.692.3373 | TF 1.888.569.1831 x 3373 | F 303.759.5355 | C 303-912.1849

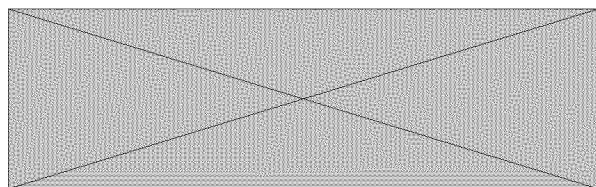
[warren.smith@state.co.us](mailto:warren.smith@state.co.us) | [www.colorado.gov/cdphe/hm](http://www.colorado.gov/cdphe/hm)

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**Warren Smith, APR**

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